



Members attend conference on Empowering the Risk Takers

WLRA members Rod Taylor and Howard Burton and Executive Director Lynn Birtleff attended the Governor's Conference on Empowering the Risk Takers, last month in Casper. The purpose of the conference was to identify what state government should and should not do to encourage economic development and business expansion among Wyoming businesses.

A preliminary random survey of Wyoming businesses before the conference identified several priority issue areas: Workers' Compensation, Financial Assistance, Transportation, Availability of Labor and Training, De-Regulation, Promotion and Tax Incentives.

The attendees, numbering nearly 200, divided into four sections: Manufacturing, Service, Commercial/Retail and Economic Development Professionals.

WLRA members attended the commercial/retail sector sessions. This group identified several priority issues:

- Promotion of Wyoming as a place to do business, travel and to live
- Adequate funding for an educational system
- Patronizing Wyoming businesses first
- Capital for business expansion/development on a community by community basis

The following three action items were identified as

priorities:

1. Develop a community involved strategic state-wide economic development plan that involves all sectors.
 - a. Improve communication between various public and private sector development organizations.
 - b. A Task Force representing all sectors to develop a 5 year strategic plan for growth.
2. Promote Wyoming as a pro-business state, then back it.
 - a. Target business in regional ad campaigns.
 - b. Continue tourism ads with an effective follow-up system.
 - c. Friendly and consistent permitting practices.
3. Invest in our children's future today.
 - a. Accountability of dollars spent on education at all levels.
 - b. Consolidation of school districts and manage ment services.
 - c. Adjust curriculum to meet Wyoming's work force needs.

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Tax Increase, continued from page 2

Tax...

At the recent Governor's Conference, Empowering the Risk Takers, Russ Fraser, from Fiich Information Services, in Powell, suggested an increase in restaurant and lodging taxes for general fund purposes. Since the retail sector is a growth sector, he also advocated increases in the gasoline, cigarette and liquor taxes.

Sheridan County Commissioner Ken Kerns advocates the elimination of the local option lodging tax and a statewide lodging tax of 2% for the local communities and 2% for state parks that could be spent on infrastructure as well as promotion.

A Jackson Hole opponent of the local option lodging tax is advocating a state-wide lodging tax with money going to local communities for infrastructure, and \$500,000 for state tourism promotion.

Yet another informal proposal includes a state-wide 2% lodging tax, with all monies returned to communities. Advocates say this proposal would eliminate time and energy spent on local elections, and perhaps eliminate some local political pressure that leads to wasteful expenditures.

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